

Managing Children's Behaviour

"To reach a child's mind a teacher must capture his heart. Only if a child feels right can he think right"

(Ginott 1972)

Promoting positive behaviour is the most constructive method of ensuring that children behave in a way which is acceptable most of the time. All children crave attention. If they get more attention when they throw a tantrum, strike out at someone or use unacceptable language than when they are playing constructively, then they will seek that attention, even if it is negative.

Children who are helpful, play constructively or demonstrate kindness should have this recognised. The reward should be in the recognition by looks, words or deeds.

Young children respond well to a positive approach to behaviour that aims to avoid conflict situations and encourages appropriate behaviour. A positive approach involves the following:

- Altering the environment so that the children can play safely rather than having to be told not to touch things.
- Having a good knowledge of child development so that you do not have unrealistic expectations, such as expecting a toddler to share.
- Using your knowledge of the child to avoid conflict situations, such as recognising when a child is getting tired.
- Giving children plenty of time to clear up or get ready to go out.
- Praise children and give them lots of attention for any attempt to behave in the way you want.
- Ignore unwanted behaviour as far as possible, sometimes even negative attention can be rewarding for a child.
- Try not to be negative, instead of telling children what not to do, make the statement more positive. Make your messages and requests clear and direct.
- Always give an explanation why you expect children to behave in a certain way.
- Do not step in too quickly when children are having an argument. Learning how to handle conflict is important for them. Monitor the situation, and be ready to step in if things get out of hand.
- Listen to children : Take seriously what children have to say. If they think you won't or don't listen to them, they will do whatever they can; however negative, until they have got your attention and you are forced to HEAR them.
- Give children the opportunity to express their feelings
- Be consistent.
- Don't rely on bribes

- Children must be treated fairly, the same rules should apply to your own children as the minded children.

Loner Child

Is the child worried about a home situation, does s/he feel secure and welcome in your home, have they learned joining in skills yet?

Most children overcome their early shyness and learn to interact with others, however some may not develop the necessary social skills, or even choose not to use them and prefer to remain alone. Adults need to respect natural shyness in children. You need to encourage a shy child to gradually mix and interact with others. Involve the child with small tasks and eventually let the child complete tasks on their own.

Wrecking Others Play

Is the child bored to frustrated? Is s/he trying to gain attention, do they need to feel powerful?

You should move the child who is being disruptive into another part of the room and explain that children are not allowed to wreck someone else's play. Offer another activity which the child has an interest in and ensure that joining-in skills are used in this activity.

Swearing

Is this normal language used at home?
Is the child trying to initiate a reaction?

Ignore if possible, as this sort of behaviour thrives on attention. Make parents aware that this is the way you are handling the swearing. Explain how words can be hurtful and give alternative ways of expressing themselves.

Biting

Many young children go through this stage. The child may not have other skills to help her get something from another child. Or the child could be attention seeking, bored or frustrated.

Careful observation is essential. Try to anticipate. Give immediate attention to the bitten child. Look the child who bites in the eye and state firmly and calmly "No biting, biting hurts". Consequences, after warnings could be removal from an activity, or not being allowed to be a helper that day.

Take every opportunity to give to a child who bites, attention for positive behaviour. **NEVER** bite a child to 'show them' what it feels like!

And remember,

children need to be told and through shows of appropriate physical affection how special and wonderful they are every day to develop into confident individuals.

Adapted from NIPPA's book "Managing Children's Behaviour" €12 from NIPPA (028) 9066 2825, www.nippa.org